

# **Legislative Audit Division**

## **Performance Audit**

### **Juvenile Delinquency Intervention Program**

**Youth Services Division, Department of Corrections  
Judicial Branch**

Members of the audit staff involved in this audit were Kent Wilcox and Mike Wingard.

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### **Performance Measures Also Essential for Panel Decision-Making**

The panel also needs performance-based evaluation information to promote program purposes and make objective and supportable decisions related to:

- ▶ Youth court allocations. Performance data could provide useful information for analyzing program activities and developing a funding methodology that encourages recommended practices or activities.
- ▶ Contingency fund requests. Performance information is useful criteria for evaluating contingency fund requests and justifying panel decisions. For example, the panel could require youth courts demonstrate youth in out-of-state placements could not receive similar services in Montana placements.
- ▶ Prevention fund plans. Performance measures would provide useful information for evaluating youth court plans for using prevention funds, and determining whether to approve continued expenditures on implemented programs or recommend those programs to other youth courts.

The department's ability to conduct extensive evaluations of youth court activities related to JDIP has been limited because youth courts have not had a uniform management information system. However, the department also has not established basic performance measures based on legislative intent, or recommended management practices that youth courts could track with available resources. For example, the department has not evaluated or reported on whether the program has reduced out-of-state placements or youth courts are giving preference to Montana facilities that meet youth placement needs. Additionally, the department needs to identify and begin collecting baseline data for comparative evaluation of program activities, including measuring results of changes to or implementation of practices, program, and strategies.

### **The Department Should Consult with the Panel**

The Office of the Court Administrator has assumed responsibility for implementing a youth court management information system, which management stated will substantially increase youth courts' capabilities for tracking and reporting program data that was previously too labor intensive to collect. The department could also consult with the Judicial Branch to identify information the new system can provide and prepare alternative methods for collecting

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data the system cannot track but the department considers essential for program evaluation purposes. Additionally, since the department and Judicial Branch have mutual interests and needs for developing performance measures, coordination could reduce potential duplication of effort.

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### **Summary of Department Program Evaluation**

The department should expand JDIP evaluations to increase emphasis on establishing performance measures and furthering legislative intent for a performance-based program. By expanding evaluations, the department can provide better management information for panel and legislative decision-making. Since the Cost Containment Review Panel has an inherent interest in comprehensive program evaluations, the department should consult with the panel during the development and implementation process.

#### **Recommendation #4**

**We recommend the Department of Corrections, in consultation with the Cost Containment Review Panel:**

- A. Establish and implement performance measures for youth court programs and services funded with Juvenile Delinquency Intervention Program funds.**
- B. Initiate collection of baseline data for effective comparison and monitoring of ongoing Juvenile Delinquency Intervention Program activities.**

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### **Improving Panel Decision- Making and Oversight of JDIP Funds**

The panel has decision-making responsibilities for managing the contingency fund and approving youth court plans for prevention funds. However, the panel does not presently have formal criteria for evaluating youth court requests for contingency funds or proposals for using prevention funds.

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### **Managing the Contingency Fund**

While the contingency fund has never been fully exhausted because of youth court requests, the panel has expressed concerns about how to appropriately address those requests while maintaining fund solvency throughout the fiscal year. For example, by February 2005, with four months remaining in the fiscal year, the panel had received almost \$1.1 million in contingency fund requests from just 8 of 22